

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to city attorneys John A. Misci, Jr., of Camden, NJ, Manuela Albuquerque of Berkley, CA, and Dee Joyce-Hayes of St. Louis, MO; King Fahd Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; and President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria.

**Teleconference Remarks With
Mayors on the Gun Safety
Agreement With Smith & Wesson**
March 17, 2000

The President. Hello.

Participant. Hello, Mr. President.

Participant. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you all for joining us. I'd like to start by asking everyone here on the phone to say their names and the city and the State they represent.

We have with us here in the Oval Office, Attorney General Spitzer of New York, Attorney General Blumenthal of Connecticut, Mayor Penelas of Miami, and Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta was here; he just walked out. So we're all here. But why don't we—everybody else who is on the phone say something about it, who you are?

[At this point, the teleconference participants introduced themselves.]

The President. We're delighted to have you on the phone call, and I want to say on behalf of not only the White House but Attorney General Reno and Deputy Attorney General Holder, Secretary Summers, and Deputy Secretary Eizenstat and Secretary Cuomo, we very much appreciate what you've done, and we congratulate you. I think that this agreement will fundamentally change the way the gun industry does business, and all of you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your leadership and involvement have helped to make all American communities safer. We couldn't be here without you, and I thank you.

Now, we've got to build on what we've accomplished today and continue to reduce gun violence. The long roster of leaders with us here today is proof that the whole Nation supports what we're doing, and we just need you to go out there and keep working with responsible mentors of the gun industry to

keep this momentum going. And I hope we can get some other manufacturers to join us.

I wonder if anybody who is here wants to say anything and anybody on the phone would like to say anything now.

[At this point, participants in the teleconference made brief remarks.]

The President. Thank you very much. If I could just echo two of the points that were made. First of all, I agree with the last point Mayor Penelas made. This proves, this agreement, that nobody was in it for the money. Everybody said all along, the States, the municipalities, and the Federal Government, nobody wanted any money damages; we just wanted a change in the way America lives to make it a safer place.

The second thing I'd like to say, to echo what Mayor Archer and Attorney General Spitzer said is, Smith & Wesson stuck their neck out here, and I think that all of us, including the Federal Government, in our procurement policies, if we really are serious about making America safer, ought to send a clear signal that we appreciate what they did. I think that that will accelerate the day in which the other manufacturers will follow suit.

I thank you all very much. This is a happy day, and I'm glad to talk to you all, and thanks for joining the phone call, and thanks for agreeing with the settlement.

Thank you all. Goodbye.

NOTE: The teleconference began at 2:37 p.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Alexander Penelas of Metro-Dade, FL; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Eliot Spitzer, attorney general, New York State; and Richard Blumenthal, attorney general, State of Connecticut. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the participating city officials.

**Message on the Observance of Saint
Patrick's Day, 2000**

March 17, 2000

Warm greetings to everyone observing Saint Patrick's Day.

It is most fitting that the feast day of the Patron Saint of Ireland should be held on the threshold of spring, the season of promise, for the Irish have always been a people of promise. With warm hearts and a deep spirituality, they embraced the promise of salvation that Saint Patrick brought to their beautiful island 16 centuries ago and preserved their faith through the tumult and chaos of the Dark Ages.

In the 19th century, suffering from famine and oppression in their own land, millions of Irish men and women recognized the promise of freedom and opportunity in America. Often enduring great hardship, they journeyed west to begin a new life in a new land. With strength and humor, courage and determination, they made America's promise a reality for themselves and their children and enriched our history and heritage with their achievements. In business, labor, education, the arts, public life, and so much more, Irish Americans have made lasting contributions to the life of our nation.

Today Irish Americans and the people of their ancestral homeland share a strong commitment to the promise of peace. In the spring of 1998, the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland sought to fulfill that promise when they voted overwhelmingly in support of the Good Friday Accord. America remains committed to the Irish people as they continue working to forge a brighter future, for, while the road ahead is long, the promise of peace is still within reach and its rewards are great.

As Irish Americans gather once again to honor Saint Patrick and to reaffirm their pride in their Irish heritage, Hillary and I extend warmest wishes to all for a wonderful celebration.

Bill Clinton

Proclamation 7281—National Poison Prevention Week, 2000

March 17, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Children face many dangers growing up, including some which we cannot foresee or prevent. But the danger of accidental poisoning from medicines, household chemicals, or other substances used routinely in the home is something we can—and must—stop. Each year during National Poison Prevention Week, we assess our progress in saving lives and reaffirm our national commitment to preventing injuries or deaths from poisoning.

We have indeed made progress in the nearly 4 decades since the Congress first authorized this annual observance. In 1962, almost 450 children died of poisoning after swallowing medicines or household chemicals. By 1996, that tragic statistic had been reduced to 47. Our goal is to reduce it to zero.

The first and most effective means to achieving this goal is the proper use of child-resistant packaging, which the Consumer Product Safety Commission requires for many medicines and household chemicals. While this special packaging is child-resistant, however, it is not childproof; therefore, it is essential that adults keep potentially poisonous substances locked away from children.

Our second line of defense is America's poison control centers, where lifesaving information is only a phone call away. If a poisoning does occur, parents or other caregivers can call one of these centers and immediately learn the appropriate actions to take to mitigate the poison's effects. Last month, I was proud to sign into law the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act, which authorizes \$140 million over the next 5 years to fund our Nation's poison control centers, to carry out a national public awareness campaign, and to establish